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Yugoslav Party Conference Proceeds

Sixty-four speakers have participated, so far, in the Third Party Conference on the problems of youth in Yugoslavia. There is little to indicate, however, that the conference has come to grips with the problems of the younger generation. Youth may even come away from the meeting more cynical of the party because it skirted the issues and failed to keep past promises. The conference has been extended into a third day when Tito will give his own analysis.

The terms of reference for the conference were stated by Krsta Avramovic, party executive bureau member responsible for youth affairs, in an opening speech. As expected, he hammered hard at the theme that much more needed to be done to promote active participation by the younger generation and that the noninvolvement has created opportunities for ideologies contrary to the policy of the LCY to "consolidate" themselves among youth.

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Increased participation will have to be on the party's terms, however. Avramovic cited the thesis that the LCY has become more "inspirational" to youth in the last few months as it has undergone its consolidation process. (This thesis is questionable.) He also cited the need for the party to play a more important role in guiding youth activity. A "particularly important" problem concerns how the party can implement its leading role among the youth. Only as part of the "organized social forces" (read party) will youth be able to achieve active and direct participation in decision-making.

Avramovic also reemphasized the need to increase the role of ideology in the educational system by making Marxism-Leninism the "prime basis" of the curriculum and educational system instead of merely a "supplementary" subject.

Discussion in his report on the problems worrying youth (jobs, meaningful participation at all levels, problems of rural youth) was vague but there was no missing Avramovic's criticism of the student and youth organizations. Unlike most other East European countries, the student organization in Yugoslavia, although tied to the larger youth organization, maintains a great deal of autonomy. Tito has been critical of this since last spring. Avramovic said that there would be no "mechanical merger" of the two organizations but called for a radical reformation and reorganization.

Some of the other speakers have been more candid. One said that young workers in Serbia are expressing "with greater daring and quite openly" dissatisfaction because their questions are not being solved more quickly. It is not likely that this conference will help. Many of the speakers spoke of local problems but few presented possible solutions. Tito's closing speech will no doubt reemphasize the role of the party but he may also be critical of the meeting for not being more creative in finding solutions.

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